

The Burke Centre Conservancy is a homeowners' association representing 5,862 homes Burke, Virginia. A planned residential community, Burke Centre is comprised of single family homes, townhouses, condominiums, co-ops, duplexes and quad units. The variety of housing located in Burke Centre provides the conservancy with unique and pressing challenges to ensure the positive livability of the area.

The board of trustees is made up of volunteer members of the association elected on an annual basis. Their purpose is to provide services to the membership, and to maintain and protect the common areas and amenities of the association. The board creates and approves a \$4,000,000 annual operating budget funded through membership assessments.

This board has been particularly active in addressing the most pressing issues facing Burke Centre. Over the past year, they updated the community strategic plan, created a community risk management plan, conducted a stream bank instability study, completed a \$250,000 wetlands remediation project, assisted in the creation of a community parking district, completed a bathymetric study of the local ponds to establish maintenance needs and revised regulations associated with the conservancy's employee personnel, investment, and procurement policies.

Burke Centre will sorely miss the guidance and leadership of President Greg Smith, Treasurer Phil Pool, Secretary Marc Flaster, Oaks Trustee Joe Berner, and Ponds Trustee Colette Sheldon who retired at the end of the year. The conservancy, however, will remain in good hands under the leadership of recently reelected Vice President Jimi Grande, Woods Trustee Kala Quintana as well as the newly elected members of the board.

Madam Speaker, in closing, I wish to commend and congratulate the outgoing board on their exceptional commitment to their community. I call upon my colleagues to join me in congratulating the 2006 Board of Trustees for the Burke Centre Conservancy and in wishing their community continued success in the years to come.

#### THE RAIL AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ACT OF 2007

**HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON**

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, March 8, 2007*

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Madam Speaker, like all Americans, I am alarmed at the lack of security for rail and public transportation systems around the country. Each weekday, 11.3 million passengers in 22 States use commuter, heavy, or light rail. History has shown that terrorists view rail and public transportation systems as potential targets. March 11 will be the 3-year anniversary of the terrorist bombings of Madrid's rail system, which killed and maimed hundreds of innocent civilians. This July marks the second anniversary of the terrorist bombings throughout London's public transportation system. Last summer, a number of bombs tore through Mumbai's rail system. Just last month, a passenger train outside New Delhi caught fire when suitcases filled with flammable liquids were exploded as the train headed for Pakistan.

Despite all of these attacks, rail and public transportation security remains a secondary issue to aviation security. In the fiscal year 2008 budget, the President only requested an additional \$4 million for TSA's surface transportation budget. TSA's entire surface transportation budget is less than 1 percent of the amount the President requested for aviation security. I am alarmed by the lack of training for frontline rail and public transportation workers. I am also worried about security issues surrounding the transportation of hazardous materials through high-threat urban areas.

This Committee has taken action to close the gaps on rail and mass transit security. We have been working on a bipartisan basis to develop the "Rail and Public Transportation Security Act of 2007." This bill requires rail and public transportation systems to complete security plans and vulnerability assessments. The bill also mandates training for frontline rail and public transportation system employees. It also gives them whistleblower protections to encourage reporting of security risks, and provides a redress process for employees who are terminated as a result of a background check. This legislation makes security grants available to rail, transit, and bus systems. Finally, it makes substantial investments in the research and development we need to find new ways to secure these systems.

My hope is that through these provisions, this comprehensive legislation will address most of the glaring gaps that currently exist in surface transportation security.

#### INTRODUCTION OF THE PARENTS' TAX RELIEF ACT OF 2007

**HON. LEE TERRY**

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, March 8, 2007*

Mr. TERRY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Parents' Tax Relief Act of 2007 to strengthen families and empower parents in providing the best possible care for their preschool children. Senator SAM BROWNBACK is introducing similar legislation in the Senate today.

This comprehensive legislation will enact family-friendly tax policies to provide parents with more child care options. It will end the long-standing inequity in the tax code that encourages daycare above stay-at-home parenting. It will also help parents spend more time with their children by encouraging flexible employment opportunities such as home-based businesses and telecommuting jobs, while ensuring that parents who take time out of the workforce to care for their children will not be penalized under the Social Security system.

Congress should recognize and support the incredible sacrifices parents make to raise their children. I have heard from Nebraska families who struggle to make ends meet so one parent can stay at home and provide the love, care and attention that every child deserves. The high Federal tax burden, which falls most heavily on the middle-class, has unfortunately made this option extremely difficult, if not unreachable, for many families. Congress has helped this situation with common-sense measures such as the child tax credit, but more should be done.

In addition, many parents need to remain in the workforce for financial or other reasons. Flexible work opportunities such as operating a home-based business or full-time or part-time telecommuting would empower working parents to spend more quality time with their children.

Parents perform a tremendous balancing act between work and family responsibilities. It can be difficult for families to survive without a second income. While the second earner's income in a family can go toward daycare costs and work-related expenses such as dry-cleaning bills and gasoline, it can also support necessities such as grocery bills, medical expenses and savings for a child's future education. Parents should be empowered with greater options for raising a family on a limited income, whether one or both parents are in the workforce.

The legislation that I am introducing today addresses the needs of modern families while empowering parents with greater choices. Greater tax relief will make it a more realistic option for parents to stay at home with their little ones in the early formative years that are so crucial to children's physical, mental and emotional development. In addition, parents would have greater opportunities for "split-shift" parenting and other options to ensure their children have the best possible care and time together as a family.

It is clear that parents want these options. A comprehensive study on balancing work and family, which was conducted by four major charitable foundations, found that 70 percent of parents believe the best arrangement for the care of young children is to have one parent at home. In a parenting survey done for Warner Books, 87 percent of mothers said they would stay at home to raise their children if they could afford it. The Family and Work Institute reported that 70 percent of working parents feel they lack enough time with their children, and nearly two-thirds of all workers would reduce their work hours by an average 11 hours a week if they could.

In addition, 62 percent of parents with preschoolers want policymakers to concentrate on making it more affordable for a parent to stay at home during a child's first few years than on improving the quality and affordability of day care. In fact, 53 percent of parents preferred direct tax cuts to stay-at-home-parents, while only 1 in 3 (33 percent) would cut costs for families using day care. Members of Congress should trust in the judgment of parents, especially regarding the care of preschool children. The Parents' Tax Relief Act, which I am introducing today with more than a dozen original cosponsors, contains seven major tax improvements to empower parents and strengthen families in America.

First, this legislation extends the Dependent Care Tax Credit to parents who choose to be at home with their children. Established in 1954, this credit currently allows families to claim up to 35 percent of \$3,000 in documented, non-parental child care costs, and 35 percent of \$6,000 in day care expenses for two children. Families who make the financial sacrifice to have one parent stay at home for their children should also benefit from this tax credit.

Second, the Parents' Tax Relief Act will make the \$1,000 child tax credit permanent and index it to inflation to retain its long-term value. This tax relief is critical for Nebraska families with dependent children.